

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7539
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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJECT: PERCY QOBOZA TAKES CHARGE OF POST

1. PERCY QOBOZA'S RETURN TO THE EDITORSHIP OF THE POST
NEWSPAPER APRIL 6, WITH HIS FIRST EDITORIAL APPEARING
APRIL 7, WAS GREETED WITH ANTICIPATION IN THE TOWNSHIPS AND
CONGRATULATORY GESTURES ON THE PART OF OTHER JOURNALISTS.
NONETHELESS, QOBOZA, HIMSELF, EXPRESSED HIS CONCERNS ABOUT
"BEING IN THE HOT SEAT" AS HE FEELS TOWNSHIP READERS WILL
CLOSELY SCRUTINIZE HIS PAPER, AND PARTICULARLY, HIS COLUMN
"PERCY' PITCH" FOR SIGNS THAT HE HAS BEEN COWED BY HIS
IMPRISONMENT.

2. QOBOZA'S FIRST DAY WAS LARGELY DOMINATED BY THE NEED TO
GET THE FEEL, ONCE AGAIN, OF THE EDITOR'S CHAIR OF SOUTH AFRICA'S
LARGEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL BLACK NEWSPAPER. CONFRONTED
BY CONSTANT REMINDER THAT THE POST IS ONLY A SURROGATE FOR
THE BANNED WORLD, QOBOZA, NONETHELESS, WAS BUSILY REORGANIZING
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THE POST BACK INTO A VIRTUAL REPLIC OF THE WORLD.

3. HIS FIRST EDITORIAL (REPEATED SPETEL) WAS A STATEMENT OF
INTEREST TO PURSUE "THE HIGHEST PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM" AND
RESIST "COMPROMISE". FURTHERMORE, QOBOZA REJECTED THE BANNING
OF THE WORLD AND HIS IMPRISONMENT, SAYING "I ASSUME THIS
POSITION TOTALLY BLIND TO THE CRIMES THAT LED THE GOVERNMENT

TAKING THE ACTIONS THEY DID".

4. FOR HIS PART, QOBOZA EXPRESSED UNEASE OVER THE EXPECTATIONS TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS WILL HOLD AS HE RESUMES CONTROL. HE SAID, "MANY WILL FEEL I HAVE SOLD OUT IF THE PAPER DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY ADOPT A MORE RADICAL LINE. THIS PAPER HAS NEVER BEEN RADICAL." NONETHELESS, IT WAS CLEAR QOBOZA WAS QUICKLY SETTLING IN AS HE BEGAN REBUILDING THE POST INTO THE MOST IMPORTANT MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION FOR BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S LARGEST TOWNSHIPS. JOHNSON

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